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ABSTRACT

This study examines the state of foreign language training provided to industry by British colleges, offers guidelines on how colleges should respond to that market, and identifies created materials that will train college personnel. The study reports that the colleges have a good product to offer but that it is inaccessible to industry because of poor marketing, the dowdy image of many colleges, and the lack of response to company needs. It is suggested that colleges offer a minimum 50 hours training that is one-to-one, with self-study supplementing tutoring. Students who were found to be the most motivated are those who have experienced a crisis because they lacked a foreign language. Other motivators identified include a pro-language environment, a financial bonus, getting to use the language, and seeing that skill in the language will help students' careers. Industry was found to need the following from suppliers of foreign language training: (1) a thorough knowledge of the foreign language needs of industry in national/local terms; (2) an understanding of the language-related needs, particularly in terms of cultural briefing and foreign business protocol; (3) a broad understanding of the foreign language acquisition process; (4) a broad overview of foreign language training and delivery, from needs analysis to assessment; and (5) high quality service that includes instruction in a wide variety of languages, first-class teachers, and expertise in discrete areas of foreign languages, such as German for engineers. (CML)

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The Provision of Foreign Language Training to Industry

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to Steve Hagen, Head of the International Office, Newcastle Polytechnic, in recognition of his pioneering work in the field of Foreign Languages in Industry.

Sue Scullard

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The Provision of Foreign Language Training to Industry

for the FHE provider

Sue Scullard

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Sue Scullard
Project Manager

FOREWORD

This report is a summary of the findings of FEU/PICKUP project RP478. A full report of the detailed research findings is available from the FEU on request.

The growth of multinational companies, the opening of markets worldwide, and, in Europe, the approach of the 1992 single market affect the provision of foreign language training in colleges in England and Wales.

FEU commissioned IC Ltd. to make an assessment of the state of foreign language training to industry in colleges. The project was designed in two stages: the first was to establish the market and offer guidelines on how colleges should respond to that market, and the second to create a materials pack which would meet the training needs of college personnel revealed in the first stage.

The research methodology in the first stage involved an approach to both the purchasers and the providers of foreign language training, to identify the extent and type of training taking place, the potential market for further and higher education (FHE), and the purchasers' perception of FHE as providers of training.

Findings showed that some companies are taking foreign language training increasingly seriously, and colleges are having to respond to industry's needs. The commercial purchaser of Foreign Language Training to Industry (FLTI) believes that FHE can offer a high quality training product, but that the product remains largely inaccessible as a result of poor marketing and business administration systems. Industry is further deterred by the dowdy image of many colleges and lack of response to company needs. Professional marketing and business systems must support the 'quality training product' that FHE is capable of producing. Success of FHE in the FLTI market-place depends on operating 'in every way like a small company' with the appropriate business systems in place.

Recommendations are made to FHE to develop the management and delivery of FLTI, particularly in its marketing, and its flexible response to the needs which industry demonstrates. The report calls for clear management support for FLTI to support an adequate resource base for setting up an FLTI unit, perhaps in conjunction with others, which can be both flexible and responsive. Colleges throughout the country should be able to provide an effective means of meeting the needs of companies requiring FLTI for their employees.

If an institution is unable to offer these services, some of its managers and/or teachers may require training in these skills. However, evidence from public sector provision shows that college lecturers generally identify their own needs in terms of language and teaching skills. There is, therefore, a range of needs to be addressed, and the report includes a checklist for staff development for FLTI encompassing business, language and teaching skills.

The multi-media resource pack is designed to meet the three categories of training need relating to marketing and managing FLTI identified in the first stage of the project:

- marketing awareness,
- marketing and selling FLTI,
- managing and delivering FLTI,

as they affect the four target groups identified in the first stage:

- LX or consortium managers;
- full-time college staff;
- part-time lecturers with experience;
- part-time lecturers without experience.

The pack comprises:

- 2 x 45 minute video lectures:
  - — FLTI: The Industrial Purchaser's Perspective
  - — Foreign Language in British Business
- two audio tapes of interviews with industrial representatives:
  - — Choosing a Training Provider
  - — Training Needs Analysis;
- two printed manuals:
  - — Marketing Planning and Marketing of FLTI
  - — Management and Delivery of FLTI.

The materials pack is being marketed by IC Ltd., Aston Science Park, Love Lane, Birmingham B7 4BJ, telephone 021-359 0981.

FEU is grateful to IC Ltd., to Robert Taylor, the Project Director, to Sue Scullard, the Project Manager, and those of her colleagues at Coventry Technical College who made a significant contribution to the project, and to the many others listed in Sue Scullard's earlier acknowledgements for all their efforts in bringing the exercise to a useful conclusion. The Unit is also grateful to Jill Warwick for her astute oversight of the project.

FEU would welcome comments on this report or information about interesting initiatives in FLTI. Comments or information should be addressed to me at FEU (tel. 01-321 0433 extension 204).

Dennis Drysdale
Deputy Chief Officer
Further Education Unit

FLTI IN THE PAST

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The provision of Foreign Language Training to Industry (FLTI) is not new. Public sector colleges have been providing such training for over 20 years, whilst private language schools, for example Berlitz and Linguarama, have made FLTI their central activity.

Yet British industry has never taken foreign language training seriously. Even taking account of companies with world-wide trading links, only a small minority of companies have provided language training — of any kind — for their personnel. Amongst the few that have provided FLTI, the approach has been unplanned and unsystematic — job-specific FLTI has almost always been undertaken as 'crisis management'. Equally, the public sector college provision of FLTI has, with one or two notable exceptions, proceeded on an *ad hoc* basis. Typical has been the learner who approaches the FLTI provider with the plea, 'I start next month as Sales Manager for Germany — how fast can I learn German, can I start next week?'. The typical provision has been the short sharp shock of the intensive course.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES ARE NOT IMPORTANT IN INDUSTRY – OR ARE THEY?

FLTI activity directly parallels the low value placed on foreign language skills in British business. Since Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), research into recruitment and training policies has shown a gradual but small improvement in the status of the Community languages in British industry; still, until recently, progress has been slow and has not kept pace with the shift in the pattern of our foreign trade away from English-speaking territories.

An investigation into purchasing and marketing in 1980 revealed:

> 'Both in marketing and purchasing, British overseas customers were agreed that inadequacy in languages was one of the UK companies' major deficiencies and these deficiencies led to poor feel for the market, difficulty in establishing firm relationships and a failure to benefit fully from suppliers' technical expertise.'[1]

English alone is manifestly not enough, yet industry largely continues to ignore the facts.

A more recent survey of the top 200 UK-owned companies, conducted by the Ambrosetti Consulting Group in 1987[2], revealed that only 18% of British executive directors and 29% of non-executive directors spoke a foreign language, and that the companies' international competitiveness was further impeded by inexperience and ignorance of business protocol outside the UK.

The most recent survey *Languages in British Business*[3] by Steve Hagen (1988), contains data collected between 1984 and 1987. It identifies a gap of alarming proportions between the foreign language skills needed by industry and the in-house skills available. More importantly, 'the overwhelming message ... of [the] study ... is that British companies are losing trading

opportunities for the lack of the right languages, many without realising it'. Only a few representatives of major companies have ever publicly acknowledged the serious consequences of this inadequacy in foreign language skills. Gordon Priestly put the case for foreign languages most forcefully: 'No language — no business'[1]. For many years the overwhelming message from the majority of companies has been that, whatever research may prove and whatever the foreigners may think, foreign languages are really just not that important to business success. Nice to know, maybe; vital definitely not.

In tandem with the low importance accorded foreign languages in British industry, systematic, long-term job-related FLTI programmes have remained a rarity.

FLTI IN THE PRESENT

THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDES TO FLTI, 1985-8

Against a background of general apathy towards foreign languages on the part of British industry, a number of factors have coincided in recent years to bring foreign languages in industry and foreign language training into the spotlight.

1985 saw the founding of the Birmingham-based company IC Ltd. This was the first of the subsequently named 'LX centres' (Language Export centres) funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) PICKUP programme, which are intended to:

> 'bring together universities, polytechnics and colleges in a given locality to work with Chambers of Commerce and the BOTB [British Overseas Trade Board] to provide support which is tailor-made to the specific business needs of individual firms to include language training, cultural and trade briefings, consultancy on export markets and documentation, interpretation and translation'.[4]

In 1988 a co-ordinator was appointed to the LX centres. There are now 20 centres and associations offering national geographical coverage of this ambitiously conceived programme. Thus the LX centres form the first network of providers with a national delivery potential for FLTI and a wide range of other language services.

During the same three-year period, Coventry Technical College, in conjunction with IC Ltd., have, via conferences and the lecturer training courses 'The Provision of Foreign Language Training to Industry', encouraged many more colleges throughout Britain to become FLTI providers.

The resultant increase in activity on education's side has had the effect of 'spreading the word' about the importance of languages and FLTI to pockets of local industry. It seems likely that marketing of language services by LX centres and other colleges has not only stimulated the market for FLTI but has helped to create a small but significant increase in industrial interest in foreign languages even before the introduction of the Single European Market (SEM) Act.

Since the approach of the SEM was announced in 1987, many linguists have held the cautious hope that industry will finally be forced to acknowledge the role of European Community (EC) languages in business success and that the status of foreign languages in British industry will thus be enhanced. Yet similar hopes were raised in 1973 when Britain entered the Common Market, but then, after a brief flurry of activity in FLTI, industry's interest in languages soon subsided.

It is to be hoped that many companies look upon the removal of trade restrictions in 1992 as an opportunity to penetrate a market of 320 million consumers. However, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) findings[5] at the time of writing suggest that, whilst 90% of companies are aware of 1992, only 20% of large companies are planning to review their strategies in the light of this knowledge and only 7% are undertaking language training. The CBI claims that many companies will go out of business in the 1990s unless they start preparing now. One major barrier to competitiveness for British firms is their apparent inadequacies in foreign language skills. Whether British industry will recognise the increased need for foreign language skills remains, however, open to question.

In 1988 the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) launched its major campaign 'Europe — Open for Business' to publicise the likely effects of the SEM, but surprisingly little reference was made to the importance of language skills in the first DTI information pack. Correspondingly, at the time of most of the surveys in this report — April 1988 — little change in industry's attitude to languages and FLTI was apparent. Yet in the following months the climate for FLTI began to change. The publication of Steven Hagen's book *Languages in British Business* (April 1988) was fortuitously timed to coincide with the increase in interest in 1992 and has attracted media attention to the urgent case for foreign languages in industry. Moreover, in the second edition of its 1992 information pack, the DTI endorsed the case for FLTI. The factsheet on language skills (No 331) states, 'There is clear evidence of a direct link between export performance and proficiency in foreign languages. Language training is an investment.'

Towards the end of 1988 the effect of this publicity on the status of foreign languages and FLTI began to be felt.

Even the most casual observer will have noticed the recent increase in job advertisements requiring foreign language skills. Yet where are these linguists to come from? The British education system has so far failed to provide an adequate diversification of foreign languages to ensure there is a pool of individuals with a facility in all the languages the country needs; and an insufficiency of trained language teachers means that this situation will continue well into the 1990s. In the interim, British industry has two other options that can help bridge the language skills gap now: the recruitment of executives from abroad and well-planned FLTI programmes.

It seems that industry is getting the message about the need for FLTI. Prior to mid-1988, serious FLTI was mainly undertaken by

those companies or individuals who 'had had their fingers burned' — who had actually felt the painful experience of failure and inadequacy due to a lack of language skills. Since the latter half of 1988, however, providers report a small influx of companies and individuals seeking FLTI as forward planning for 1992. Moreover, the DTI campaign has attracted company awareness of the need for training, not only in EC languages, but also in other languages.

PLUS CA CHANGE?

It is important to see the true nature of the change in attitudes. There is a marked discrepancy even in the attitudes of those companies and individuals with a purported positive attitude to foreign languages. One the one hand companies are beginning to perceive that they may have lost trading opportunities for lack of foreign language skills in the past, and that the prognosis for 1992 without such skills is not a propitious one. On the other hand most companies still show a marked reluctance to take systematic long-term action to rectify this situation.

Long-internalised attitudes that suggest to the British populace as a whole that foreign languages, and their concomitant cultural awareness, are of little importance cannot be changed overnight, and not by logical argument or statistics alone. Nor will a dawning recognition of the business value of foreign languages by itself suffice, for many British adults are simply afraid of the 'painful' process of language learning.

The attitudes to FLTI prevalent in the majority of companies can still be characterised by apathy, fear or, at best, inexperience, and it is the conscientious FLTI providers' task to tackle these factors by supplying and promoting a quality FLTI service.

FLTI IN THE FUTURE

A CHANCE FOR PROVIDERS

It seems likely that the approach of the SEM in 1992 will prove the biggest market opportunity FLTI has ever had. More importantly, as industry begins to include FLTI in future rather than short-term planning, the successful provider will have the pleasant task of marketing and designing long-term, systematic job-specific language training programmes and proving once and for all what good FLTI can really do for British business.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

The gradual enhancement of the status of foreign languages and FLTI remains the responsibility of all those who understand and are committed to promoting the value of foreign language skills. Most British companies will be too busy surviving to take the lead.

Clearly the impetus for continued change has to come from the education providers supported by the government. Action is needed on many fronts:

- There must be a sustained awareness-raising campaign that continues to promote the message that foreign languages are vital to the business success and future competitiveness of British industry.

- The opportunity created by the SEM publicity campaign must also be utilised to focus attention on other important trading languages (e.g. Russian, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese).
- A dramatic change is needed in the pattern of foreign language teaching in schools and colleges to meet the language skills gap; this will have attendant implications for teacher training and recruitment. At present it is disappointing that the National Curriculum Language Policy fails to endorse the value of the full range of important trading languages identified by Hagen.
- Further research is required into the way foreign languages are best acquired and the kinds of language that the country needs.
- There needs to be a sustained campaign to promote the role and value of FLTI in meeting the language skills gap in industry ***now*** .
- There must be nationwide provision and professional delivery of high quality FLTI (and related services) in all the languages and skills areas industry needs.

The FLTI provider is in the front line of action. Through the promotion and provision of FLTI the conscientious provider has a dual role to play — promoting awareness of the very real benefits to industry of a variety of foreign language skills and the nature of a quality 'FLTI' product as perceived by language training experts, whilst at the same time getting on with the job of providing the quality foreign language training as perceived by industry.

It is to help education providers understand the FLTI market in order to meet this dual challenge that this report has been written. FLTI has a major role to play in making British industry competitive, now, in 1992, and beyond; the success of FLTI — and therefore to some extent the success of British business — depends on the FLTI providers' energy, determination and professionalism in the market-place.

2 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

AIMS

The aims of the research were:

- taking as its starting-point FLTI as a means of meeting the foreign languages skills gap identified elsewhere, to investigate the current and future state of the FLTI market;
- to define the role of further and higher education (FHE) as a provider of FLTI.

OBJECTIVES

The project had seven objectives:

- to identify the foreign language training needs and wants of industry;
- to identify industry's attitudes to FLTI;
- to identify the state of the art of FLTI as perceived by industry;
- to identify the attitudes of industry to FHE as a provider of FLTI;
- to identify unmet FLTI needs and wants of industry;
- to identify the state of the art of FLTI as provided and perceived by FHE;
- to identify improvements that FHE colleges need/want to make to their activities as providers of FLTI.

METHODOLOGY

Following a literature search, the most recent and relevant research works were consulted.

The research focused on two main areas:

- the customer from industry;
- lecturers from FHE.

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in both areas.

THE INDUSTRIAL PERSPECTIVE

The quantitative data were obtained from a telephone survey in March 1988. Three hundred exporting companies were randomly selected to give national coverage of Britain; telephone contact was made with 262 of these firms.

The telephone survey was supplemented with face-to-face discussions with five training officers in April and November 1988. In addition, several formal interviews with individual training managers were conducted, and there were informal discussions with 30 industrial learners and purchasers of FLTI.

THE COLLEGE PERSPECTIVE

In March 1988, 460 questionnaires were sent out to:

- named contacts on the IC Ltd. database;
- all the languages departments in every FE college, polytechnic and university in Britain.

One hundred and ninety-eight replies were analysed.

In February 1989 a shortened version of the questionnaire was sent out to all LX centres.

In February-April 1988, face-to-face interviews were organised in key FHE departments providing FLTI. The departments included:

- at least one LX centre;
- one consortium of colleges;
- one newcomer to FLTI;
- one rural college.

The interviews were recorded and analysed. A written report on each participating college was prepared.

In addition, discussion groups focusing on lecturers' problems with FLTI and their training needs were organised at four LX centres.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research findings were supplemented by the continuing professional involvement of the research team in FLTI, which provided an additional source of relevant information from both the industry and the college perspective.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM INDUSTRY

THE PROVISION OF TRAINING

Whilst the DTI and other 1992 campaigns, and the publicity attracted by the Hagen research, have increased industry's awareness of its language skills deficit, many companies still remain entrenched in their negative attitudes to foreign languages and are unwilling to consider FLTI.

The companies chosen for the survey were selected because of their trading links with non-English-speaking countries. Only a third of the companies had ever provided FLTI for their personnel, and only 15.6% had a programme of language training. Thus nearly two-thirds of the companies had never provided foreign language training for their personnel. Ten per cent of the respondents did not provide such training, but would consider it in the future; thus half of the sample not only had never provided FLT, but would also not consider having such training in the future.

A further 70 companies were contacted but did not complete the interview. Many of these were either not interested in FLTI or were hostile to the idea. Out of the total sample contacted (262), only 28.6% of exporting companies had ever operated FLTI programmes, only 11.5% were currently having FLTI and only 7.2% would consider offering FLTI for the first time in the future.

The telephone survey and direct contacts with companies established that the companies most likely to provide staff with foreign language training were the larger companies with world-wide trading links and a higher turnover.

Individual interviews with small firms revealed that the high cost of FLTI in terms of both money and the time of key personnel acted as the main deterrent to embarking on a training course. However, small firms that had taken the plunge were the first to notice the benefits of FLTI in terms of money saved and improved relationships with their foreign trading partners.

Questioning of Training Managers in Spring 1989 suggested that industry's interest in FLTI continues to grow as a result of the 1992 Act. Some companies were planning to expand their FLTI programmes as a result of the publicity surrounding the SEM Act, and many individuals and firms were considering FLTI for the first time.

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Of those companies that did provide foreign language training, only a few large companies had a well-planned systematic foreign language training programme. In most companies the training took place on an *ad hoc* basis.

Most of the recipients of FLTI were in sales and marketing, whilst 14% were in engineering and 3% in technical services.

The languages in which training had taken place were:

- French
- German
- Spanish
- Italian

with Chinese, Japanese, Russian and other languages receiving only one or two mentions.

However, the respondents in the telephone survey often knew little about the content, timing and duration of the foreign language training courses in their company and had only an imprecise idea of the languages in which training had taken place.

On the whole, foreign language training was perceived as successful or fairly successful. It is perhaps significant that the respondents were more willing and able to comment on the success or otherwise of training than on the educational process. Industry is, of course, primarily interested in the outcomes of FLTI, i.e. the ability to perform according to job-specific criteria.

Individual interviews with companies revealed that firms currently operate four types of training programme:

- One-to-one courses or courses in small groups that are provided on an *ad hoc* basis to meet a job-driven need as the need arises. Usually this training is not part of a company plan; most frequently the learners identify their own need and approach the Training Manager or their line manager with a request for training. The training is usually provided off-site.
- Large companies (e.g. Jaguar, ICI, GKN) sometimes operate general language courses in the main European languages offered 'as a perk' to largish groups of volunteers, who may all have their different reasons for learning the language, including business needs and leisure purposes. These classes are not dissimilar to the college evening class and in fact are often taught by local college staff on company premises.
- Large companies may also offer in-company language 'maintenance' classes in small groups or one-to-one for staff with identified language needs or for high-flyers. Firms with a foreign parent company typically offer such courses.
- A few large companies provide small-group tuition for a particular target audience with specific but homogeneous needs, e.g. telephonists. The training may be or may not be in-company.

LANGUAGE NEEDS OF THE INDUSTRIAL LEARNER

Whilst some large companies operate 'language maintenance' classes or language classes as a perk (classes offered on a regular basis usually to volunteers), the majority of FLTI takes place as a result of a job-driven need: e.g. the learner has to purchase tooling from abroad. Such learners are looking for job-specific outcomes to the training.

The majority of learners interviewed need oral/aural skills rather than reading/writing skills in the foreign language.

The majority of learners of FLTI require 'social language' as a first priority, i.e. not the language of the tourist abroad, but that required for socialising in a business context.

Telephone skills come high on the list of priorities and are necessary as a framework for many other areas of job-specific language — most frequently checking invoices, payments and despatch dates.

Other important priorities are the (high level) skills of negotiating in a foreign language and understanding asides.

Face-to-face interviews revealed an increasing number of companies that are seeking to expand via foreign acquisitions or that, conversely, have recently been taken over by a foreign company. The language needed for the acquisition process itself is highly specialised and this is followed by the need for communications systems between parent company and acquisition, as well as training to overcome 'the culture shock' of such a cross-cultural marriage.

In the West Midlands, the language of engineering is the most frequently needed specialist language. Whilst many learners had originally felt that they needed to specialise in a discrete area of language, e.g. 'German for engineering', this often emerges as less important once training has commenced. This may be due to the fact that many learners are beginners or *faux débutantes*.

For example, one Managing Director of an engineering company who had requested 'technical German' found that he could only cope with the language needed 'to socialise' and to negotiate the details of contracts, but that this proved to be adequate to his purposes. With this language at his disposal he could obviate the necessity for a German agent within six months of starting training.

Some learners, however, do need highly specialised technical or job-specific language and their needs are the most difficult to meet, as Training Managers have found few providers with the capacity to deliver this kind of language training satisfactorily.

FINDING AN FLTI PROVIDER

Because the majority of purchasers are inexperienced in buying FLTI, choosing a new provider presents more problems than the selection of a supplier of any other form of training. Managers are often uncertain of how to proceed or where to find a provider.

Nearly half the respondents claimed that when looking for an FLTI provider they would approach a local public sector college first for information.

The personal recommendations of other managers, trade directories and yellow pages are second, third and fourth in order of importance when searching for a provider of FLTI. However, as few managers have much experience of FLTI, personal recommendations are not always fruitful, and few providers advertise in directories or the yellow pages.

Training Managers complained of inadequate advertising of foreign language training — they rarely received mail-shots from foreign language training companies. Because of the difficulties of finding a reliable supplier, some Training Managers suggested that a 'Directory of FLTI Suppliers' would be very useful.

Companies with a long record of FLTI provision usually have their established suppliers of FLTI in the main European languages and are not actively looking for new suppliers of training in these languages. However, there is an increasing

demand for good suppliers of training in 'the more unusual languages', particularly Japanese, Chinese and Arabic.

Newcomers to FLTI usually select three or four training providers and investigate these in detail.

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF A TRAINING PROVIDER

Most companies that do provide foreign language training use several training providers.

Companies are most likely to favour the provider they know.

First-time buyers of foreign language training and experienced purchasers tend to employ different criteria in their selection of a training provider:

- price and a flexible approach are often the two most important factors for the first-time buyer;
- the reputation of the provider and the quality and perceived success of training are more important to the experienced purchaser.

Another factor considered important in the selection of a training provider is a professional sales approach:

- a fast initial response to requests for help;
- a flexible, responsive client-centred approach to the initial interview;
- fast follow-up with an outline course and price;
- fast turn-around of contracts, correspondence and invoices.

It was apparent that the Training Managers with little experience of FLTI were uncertain how to judge the likely quality of any training on offer. For the relative newcomer to FLTI, therefore, a professional sales image was a crucial factor when choosing a supplier, simply because the managers had no other criteria on which to base their judgements.

INDUSTRY'S EXPERIENCE OF COLLEGES AS SUPPLIERS OF FLTI

Over half the companies in the telephone survey use a public sector provider either as well as or instead of private sector provision.

Public sector colleges start with a clear marketing advantage over other providers, namely:

- the telephone survey revealed that a majority of companies believe that the best quality training is available from a college;
- in addition, nearly half the interviewees would consult a public sector college first for information on FLTI.

However, colleges do not appear to capitalise on this marketing advantage. With the exception of 'quality of tuition', the image of FHE as perceived by industry remains poor to variable.

A majority of purchasers of FLTI expressed frustration at the generally poor business and administrative systems of colleges.

When seeking a training supplier, many Training Managers cannot get past the first hurdle of making contact with language

lecturers. They are frustrated by the impossibility of getting through on the telephone and therefore look elsewhere. Once contact has been made, some Training Managers were pleasantly surprised by the responsiveness of language lecturers.

However, some Training Managers feel that, whilst the quality of teaching in FHE may be good, colleges are not responsive to their needs in terms of course content, timing and delivery mode. Training Managers also express reluctance to employ public sector colleges for FLTI because of the inconvenience of the college year, particularly the long summer vacation.

One Training Manager claimed, 'If I wanted to get FLTI off the ground quickly and effectively in my company, a college is probably the last place I'd go to'.

Purchasers of FLTI, and particularly learners of foreign languages, associate public sector colleges with school, and are put off by the school-like atmosphere, poor accommodation and fear of 'having to learn verbs'.

Even when the difficulties of accessing the public sector FLTI product are overcome, it seems likely that the 'top-end of the FLTI market' is not the prerogative of FHE. Private sector FLTI was rated as more successful than FLTI provided by FHE, probably because of the type of provision most frequently supplied by colleges. It seems likely that, whilst the public sector college provides more foreign language training than other suppliers, the public sector provision is often of an evening-class type or similar. The more 'serious' training is often the preserve of the private sector. The private sector supplies proportionally more specialised training tailored to a company's needs in small groups or one-to-one, which is also more lucrative.

CULTURAL BRIEFING

Many experienced business learners acknowledge the importance of cultural training as part of any good FLTI programme. Training Managers expressed concern about purchasing such training in the future, but have as yet little or no experience in the field, and there are very few providers.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR COLLEGE PERSPECTIVE ON FLTI

Public sector colleges have been providing FLTI for many years, usually on a sporadic basis. The provision has mainly been the preserve of FE, as few establishments of HE have shown an interest in this type of work. The surveys in this report reveal a high degree of enthusiasm for FLTI — over 80% of the respondents not currently involved in FLTI expressed the desire to enter the field and a startling 100% of all colleges currently involved in FLTI would like to expand their services. Moreover, a majority of providers claim that their FLTI work has been expanding in the past two or three years. However, although the prognosis for the public sector provider of FLTI appears to be a positive one, it is important not to exaggerate the picture. With the exception of a few highly committed colleges, FHE has been involved in FLTI in a very small way. FLTI forms a very small part of the work of most languages departments, with a small number of learners and companies receiving training. Meanwhile private language schools have continued to corner the more lucrative and specialised end of the FLTI market. Yet FHE has the teaching staff with the language capability to meet all of industry's foreign language needs as identified in *Languages in British Business*, and apparently the staff have the will and the enthusiasm for FLTI.

Why, then, have only a few dedicated colleges become successful providers of FLTI?

First, some of the recent interest on the part of FHE is due to the increasing need to generate income — a necessity many lecturers have viewed with some ambivalence. Experienced Training Managers claim they quickly learn to distinguish between the genuinely enthusiastic public sector provider of FLTI and those entering the market with reluctance. College lecturers usually have many demands on their time other than FLTI: few lecturers are given the time and resources to run an FLTI business successfully; moreover, colleges appear to have given little thought to rewarding entrepreneurial staff. Secondly, and more importantly, the college systems are not properly geared up to running a business such as the provision of FLTI, and even the most dedicated languages department is likely to encounter problems when trying to manage such a business from within a college base. Colleges have only recently begun to take income generation at all seriously and have only partially adapted to that need. Industry is used to dealing with other businesses and is not willing to make allowances for the colleges to operate differently. The inflexibility of the college year, poor public relations, poor marketing, and slow and cumbersome administration mean that it is often easier for paying customers to take their custom elsewhere.

The LX centres offer a means of overcoming some of the problems that make the foreign language training product as offered by many FHE providers accessible only with difficulty. However, the need for colleges to generate profit will increasingly mean that colleges will be unsure whether to compete or co-operate with LX centres.

Those few colleges that provide a substantial amount of FLTI offer industry a virtually unique service in that they provide flexible, value-for-money training; and lecturers will spend many long (mainly unpaid) hours designing special material to meet individual needs, often for the love of the work alone — something no wholly commercial organisation could consider.

As at March 1989, the LX centres reported a marked upsurge in the demand for FLTI, particularly in the Community languages, including Portuguese and Dutch, since the middle of 1988. All the centres attributed the upward trend to the DTI campaign.

COLLEGE INVOLVEMENT IN FLTI

Just over 200 colleges were included in the survey, of which just over half provide FLTI whilst just under half do not, though most of the latter would like to do so.

On the whole, public sector FLTI is managed by a relatively small pool of full-time lecturers whilst much of the teaching is done by part-time staff who can more easily offer the flexibility and range of languages that industry requires. Not surprisingly, the languages departments currently involved in FLTI tend to be the larger-than-average departments, with several full-time languages lecturers and a substantial pool of part-time staff. By contrast, 17.5% of those colleges not involved in FLTI that would like to be have no full-time languages lecturer.

Those respondents not involved in FLTI expressed a need for increased staffing, time allocation and resources in order to enter the FLTI market.

LANGUAGES AVAILABLE

The public sector college is well equipped to offer the languages identified as important to industry.

All of those currently involved in FLTI can offer French and German, and almost all can also offer Spanish and Italian. Nearly two-thirds can offer Russian and 29% Arabic. Japanese and Chinese are available in 22% and 19% respectively of these colleges. Half of these colleges can offer at least one other language.

The group of colleges which do not provide FLTI, but which would like to, though less well-staffed than the current providers of FLTI, also have a wide range of languages to offer. Over two-thirds of these colleges can provide the four main European languages, nearly a third also offer Russian but only 4% can offer either Japanese or Chinese.

Almost all of the providers of FLTI, and 70% of those who would like to, offer vocational language courses other than FLTI. This is likely to be advantageous, as staff will already have a broad base in foreign languages for business purposes. However, only a small minority of colleges specialise in highly technical language for specific industrial purposes; this is an area in need of further development.

FLTI PROVIDED BY PUBLIC SECTOR COLLEGES, MARCH 1987 — MARCH 1988

As at April 1988, three-quarters of the current FHE providers of FLTI out of a total of 98 had provided training in German, and

just under three-quarters in French. Half the colleges had provided training in Spanish and a third in Italian. Only a small percentage of colleges had provided training in the more unusual languages: Arabic (8%) Russian (7%) Japanese (6%) and Chinese (3%). Seventeen per cent of colleges had provided training in at least one other language.

This provision follows the pattern of foreign language need established by Steve Hagen. However, from a comparison with languages on offer, it is apparent that colleges have the staff to provide more training in all languages, particularly in the minority languages.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Colleges in the questionnaire survey claimed that they were willing to provide anything, anytime, anywhere — but 'please, not too formal and not in college holidays!'.

Colleges seem to be providing a flexible service, tailor-made to meet industry's needs in terms of timing, duration, place, group composition, and course content. There are, nevertheless, gaps in the provision which mean that less than a total service is being provided or can be provided. The lack of provision in college holidays reflects college rather than industry's needs and is a potential problem area.

However, a minority of highly successful public sector providers of FLTI do indeed supply a 'total quality client-centred service', which includes provision in the holidays.

PRE-COURSE PROVISION

Most colleges provide an informal needs analysis prior to a training course, whilst only a quarter provide a formal written needs analysis.

Over half will provide a tailor-made syllabus, and one respondent rightly decried the nationwide duplication of effort involved in the production of such syllabuses.

Aptitude testing is not generally available and 11% of colleges indicated that they would be unwilling/unable to provide such a test. This is not surprising as aptitude testing is an under-researched area in language teaching as a whole.

COURSE PROVISION

Group composition

Small-group tuition is the most common arrangement (81%), whilst almost two-thirds of the colleges have provided one-to-one tuition to industry.

Place

The majority of the teaching occurs in-plant (69% of respondents), closely followed by in-college training. Only 10% of those involved in FLTI have provided courses abroad, and 19% claim that they would be unwilling or unable to provide such courses.

Timing and duration

The majority of FLTI is taking place during 'unsocial' hours

(lunchtime/twilight hours/before 9.00 a.m.). Thus a considerable degree of flexibility is on offer. However, courses during college holidays were provided by only 28% of respondents, and 10% indicated that they would be unable or unwilling to provide courses in holidays.

The most usual type of provision is the short or intensive course, whilst nearly half the colleges have provided flexitime booked on an hourly basis and 'drip-feed' on a regular basis.

Content

The vast majority of colleges (82%) claim they are providing tailor-made courses to meet individual needs. Many colleges (41%) have also provided fixed-syllabus courses to industry.

Assessment

Assessment of courses to industry is largely on an informal basis. About one-third of colleges have also provided:

- a written profiling of achievement (30%);
- an external examination (30%).

Where the examining boards were named, these included the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Institute of Linguists and the Royal Society of Arts.

Other forms of assessment mentioned included colleges' own schemes and tutor assessment by the learners.

Although asked, few colleges indicated that they were unwilling or unable to provide any of the services outlined above. Most respondents are presumably willing to try anything!

QUANTITY OF FLTI

Despite the fact that many colleges have been involved in FLTI over a long period (10 years or more), the majority of colleges are currently involved in a very small way.

With one or two notable exceptions, FLTI represents only a very small proportion of most colleges' foreign language provision.

The degree to which highly specialised courses are provided by FHE is open to question. There appears to be a discrepancy between the findings of the industry surveys, which suggest that much of the college provision is 'evening-class type' or similar, and the college questionnaire survey, which suggests a more tailored approach. However, this apparent discrepancy can be explained by the very small amount of FLTI that colleges claim to have provided. Individual contacts bear out the impression that much of college provision is 'evening-class type' and that only a small number of tailored courses are taking place.

This tailoring is primarily in terms of timing and duration. The tailoring of course content is often left to the discretion of the individual tutor.

DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT IN FLTI

Nearly half the colleges out of a total of 96 have been involved in the provision of FLTI for 10 years or more, whilst 24% are newcomers with up to 1 ½ years' experience.

There was no significant difference between the newcomers and the 'old hands' in terms of the quantity of FLTI provided or number of services offered. Experience does not necessarily appear to have led to a better service.

The newcomers all claimed that their FLTI work is expanding and tended to have made an active decision to provide FLTI with college management backing, having perceived a niche in terms of the needs of local industry.

FLTI AND COMPANY SIZE

Larger firms undertake the most FLTI (61% of colleges have provided FLTI to large firms), followed by medium-sized firms. It seems that the small-firms market remains relatively inaccessible.

CULTURAL BRIEFING AND OTHER LANGUAGE-RELATED SERVICES

Nearly two-thirds of the colleges also provide one or more of the following related services to industry:

- cultural briefing (27%);
- export skills training (20%);
- interpreting (35%);
- technical translations (57%).

A number of respondents have written separately to indicate the fact that the demand in these areas in general is increasing and in particular that the demand for translation services is high. There is also a widely expressed belief that cultural briefing will become increasingly important, though few such briefings are taking place at present.

MARKETING THE SERVICE

Ninety per cent of those already involved in FLTI claim to be already actively marketing their services, although many hedged this response with provisos such as 'not as much as we would like' or 'yes and no'.

These provisos, together with the indications that work will expand when positive action is taken, suggest that the marketing strategies employed by many colleges may be in need of revision. All of the 10% who did not actively market their services blamed resource problems.

The majority (52%) of the respondents involved in FLTI are members of an LX centre or consortium. In addition, a further 28% plan to join an LX centre or consortium, making a total of 80% of 'yes' respondents who are currently involved in pooling foreign language teaching resources or who perceive the benefits of doing so.

Most of the respondents who claim that they actively market FLTI have recourse to more than one marketing option:

- through an LX centre;
- through college marketing;
- the languages section does its own marketing.

Most of the colleges have one or more of the following:

- a list of local employers;
- a person responsible for marketing the college;
- a person responsible for promoting training to industry.

Few languages lecturers have remission from teaching duties for marketing (19%), and 81% had no remission of any kind for marketing or managing FLTI or for course design. Eighteen per cent wrote 'NO!!' in the margin next to the question regarding remission, indicating some considerable strength of feeling.

Not surprisingly, a more detailed analysis, as well as individual interviews, revealed a high correlation between proactive promotion of services and success as providers of FLTI.

PRICES AND PRICING POLICY

The majority base their prices on a per-hour rate (71%) or for a package of up to 50 hours (43%). Few colleges obtain a commitment to training lasting more than 50 hours.

Prices per hour work out approximately as follows (April 1988):

- less than £15 — 13% of colleges
- £15-25 — 43%
- £26-35 — 45%
- more than £35 — 10%

Many colleges operate two pricing strategies and two price brackets. There is movement towards the higher price bracket and towards pricing on a package rather than an hourly basis.

Those colleges that operate variable pricing pointed to product differentiation as the decisive factor in pricing policy. These were the most experienced and successful colleges or consortia.

Those charging more than £35 per hour were mainly either members of an LX centre or had remission for FLTI, or both.

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

As the majority claim to be actively marketing their services to industry, an attempt was made to pinpoint a qualitative correlation between marketing provision and success in FLTI measured in terms of whether the provision is expanding, the nature and quantity of that provision, and the price/pricing policy as well as ad hoc comments in the margin.

In these terms, the languages sections most successful in FLTI, as well as the sections most optimistic about the future of FLTI, are likely to exhibit the following characteristics:

- the languages section is very large or is part of an LX centre or consortium;
- the languages section has remission for marketing and management of FLTI;
- the languages section itself took an active decision to expand;
- the section perceives that there is college management support;
- the college can offer practical marketing support.

Encouragingly, the majority of colleges claim that their work in industry is expanding; 29% claim it is staying the same; and a mere 6% claim that FLTI is contracting.

The 58 respondents who claim that FLTI is expanding gave the following reasons, listed in order of importance:

- an active decision on the part of the languages section;
- demand from industry;
- college management support.

The respondents who claim that the amount of FLTI has stayed the same gave the two main reasons as:

- demand from industry;
- staffing resources.

The five respondents who claim that FLTI is contracting divided 'the blame' equally between college management and demand from industry.

Thus, those whose work is not expanding 'blame' industry whereas those whose work in FLTI is expanding lay heavy emphasis on their own role and on that of college management, which together presumably help to create the upward spiral of interest from industry's side. These responses have very clear marketing implications for colleges wanting to be involved in or to increase the provision of FLTI.

Evidence from industry indicates that professional marketing and business systems are needed to support the 'quality training product' that FHE is capable of producing. If an institution is unable to offer these services, then the manager/teacher of FLTI may require training in the appropriate skills in order to offer industry the service it requires. Evidence from public sector provision shows that college lecturers see they have needs in terms of language and teaching skills. Hence this checklist for staff development of FLTI encompasses business, language and teaching skills.

There are four target groups for training:

- LX centre managers/consortium co-ordinators;
- full-time college staff;
- part-time staff with teacher training and/or experience;
- part-time staff without teacher training and/or experience.

Training within these groups will relate to the roles which individuals are called upon to play in the management and delivery or FLTI. The roles are:

- Business Systems Manager;
- Sales and Marketing Manager;
- Training Manager;
- Teacher.

There are five areas which relate to these roles in which training is required:

Market awareness

- a broad understanding of the nature and function of industry;
- the industrial customer's foreign language needs;
- the industrial customer's attitudes to foreign languages and foreign language training;
- the industrial customer's foreign language training needs.

Marketing and selling FLTI

- awareness of competition;
- audit of skills available within provider's organisation;
- SWOT analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses in the organisation, Opportunities and Threats in the market-place);
- pricing and costing policies;
- drawing-up of a marketing plan;
- building-up of a database of potential clients and their needs;
- selection of appropriate promotional activities;
- targeting of promotional activities;

- design of advertising materials;
- use of mail shots;
- exhibitions;
- press releases;
- telephone sales;
- sales visits.

Management and delivery of FLTI

- auditing of companies for foreign language training needs;
- design of company training programmes;
- aptitude testing for language ability;
- individual needs analysis;
- course design, including:
  - — delivery mode,
  - — timing,
  - — duration,
  - — location;
- selection of teaching staff;
- resourcing of FLTI;
- monitoring of courses;
- assessment and evaluation;
- course types including:
  - — intensive,
  - — one-to-one,
  - — drip-feed,
  - — group tuition;
- learner motivation.

FLTI teacher training

- teaching of languages for special purposes;
- accessing discrete specialised areas of language;
- syllabus design;
- materials design;
- use of authentic documents as teaching materials;
- production of distance learning materials;
- information about suitable published materials for use in industry;
- adaptation of general materials for use in industry;
- business language skills;
- pedagogic skills for specialised courses:
  - — one-to-one,
  - — drip-feed,

— intensive,
— simulations;

- motivation of the industrial learner;
- if necessary, basic teaching techniques for:
  - — reading skills,
  - — writing skills,
  - — listening skills,
  - — speaking skills.

Business systems

- business planning;
- marketing planning;
- basic accountancy;
- office administration.

PROBLEMS WITH FLTI PROGRAMMES

A number of problems beset the ***management*** of FLTI that make it quite different from other forms of training.

TIME

Acquiring a degree of fluency in a foreign language takes a great deal of time. Fifty hours training would be a minimum for the acquisition of basic social, survival and business skills from scratch.

GROUPING

It is difficult to form effective groups for job-specific FLTI for a number of reasons, the most important being the disparity of job-specific language needs between, for example, an engineer, a marketing manager and a secretary. Moreover, most FLTI learners travel abroad frequently, and attendance problems quickly beset any groups not pursuing short intensive courses. Therefore one-to-one training on a flexible 'diary' basis may be the only suitable alternative to intensive courses.

METHOD

As a foreign language is a means of communication, language learning progresses fastest with a significant proportion of tutor-learner interaction. Again this can make the training seem expensive. Self-study may be used to supplement tutor contact. Busy business learners particularly welcome cassette tapes to supplement learning whilst driving to work. Many learners report the purchase of well-known self-study records, but these are seldom considered effective.

EXPENSE

The long hours of study, small groups and high incidence of tutor-learner contact that characterise good quality effective job-specific FLTI make it seem prohibitively expensive in comparison with other forms of training, despite the fact that the price per tutor-hour is usually lower than for other forms of training, e.g. management training.

INEXPERIENCE OF FLTI

Some Training Managers have only come to the realisation of these points after disappointing experiences with FLTI.

With other training it is often both cost-effective and educationally effective to arrange learners in fairly large groups of 12-20. Many purchasers of FLTI have followed this same formula with FLTI and found to their cost that it is not an effective approach. Equally, short intensive courses, which are a popular training mode, are not always efficient as a means of acquiring a foreign language. Further, several companies report the purchase of traditional 'open learning' foreign language packs with disappointing results. Disillusionment with FLTI *per se* may follow.

MOTIVATION

Even if the training is managed effectively so that these problems

do not occur, the motivation of learners can be a difficulty, as many industrial personnel feel that foreign languages are not that important.

On the whole, only those staff who have personally encountered a 'crisis situation' through lack of foreign language skills are keen to pursue an FLTI programme. At that stage, the short/intensive course seems an attractive option, though for a beginner it is rarely the most effective route. However, the SEM appears to be increasing motivation.

FEAR

A further motivational problem is fear of learning a language, because of negative previous experiences, usually at school, and 'performance anxiety'. Therefore a supportive teaching style and environment that overcome the learner's fears are very important to the success of FLTI. This is particularly true where the learner is a high-ranking executive or Managing Director of a company.

OVERCOMING THESE PROBLEMS

Many learners, however, once embarked on an FLTI programme, have found modern teaching techniques to be supportive; for some, the language learning process had become a highly enjoyable break from routine.

Most business learners have to put the language acquired to immediate use in the course of their work and are therefore rapidly convinced of the benefits of FLTI, both business and social, once training has commenced.

Almost all the learners contacted were satisfied that FLTI had helped them become more effective in their jobs.

In one company, it was very apparent that motivation to learn a language was maintained by direct experience of success in using the language — even a smattering of language can achieve a very encouraging effect. The personnel who had had language training exhibited very positive attitudes to their foreign counterparts, which must be good for business; in contrast, those who had not had such training sometimes exhibited a degree of xenophobia, which certainly could not be good for the company concerned.

In some companies, particularly those that are foreign-owned, personnel are aware that language skills are vital to career success, and this provides a very strong incentive to the learner of FLTI.

One company interviewed offers a small financial bonus to encourage learners of FLTI. A company ethos that is pro-languages is an obvious incentive to the learner.

THE CHANGING FLTI MARKET-PLACE

It is clear from the survey of British exporting companies, as well as past research, that the business value of foreign language skills has rarely been acknowledged by British firms. If 'need' can be defined as a deprivation, and 'want' as a felt deprivation, then industry has failed to recognise its very real ***language*** 'needs' as a 'want'. As a result, industry has failed to recognise the 'need' for ***FLTI*** as a 'want', and it is for this reason that few companies have anything approximating to a well-planned FLTI programme.

Yet industry's attitudes to FLTI are changing. Both the industrial and the college surveys show a marked increase in the uptake of FLTI in the last three years, and the publicity surrounding the SEM Act has considerably accelerated the trend.

The FLTI provider, therefore, is on the verge of a potential breakthrough if the FLTI market is properly identified and managed. The key questions for the successful supplier are: What is the nature of the FLTI market? What FLTI products does the market want? What factors will influence FLTI buyer behaviour in a particular supplier's favour?

THE NATURE OF THE FLTI MARKET

Attitudes to training vary enormously from company to company; indeed, some companies do not offer their personnel any kind of training. In those companies that do train, there may be an ethos that is either pro-languages, uninterested or hostile to foreign languages, and this will have a marked effect on the ease of marketing FLTI.

From a marketing point of view, there are basically five categories of company that have FLTI needs:

The established

These are companies that already have well-planned, well-established FLTI programmes. They are usually large, successful international organisations and form a small minority of the companies that need FLTI. The core training may be provided by an in-house team, but there are usually sales opportunities for other FLTI suppliers, particularly in the provision of minority languages.

The sporadic

These are companies that have provided FLTI on and off over a number of years, but in which the training depends on arrangements made 'as the need arises' or on 'languages for leisure' courses provided as a perk rather than to meet an identified need. Training is provided from a variety of sources, including open learning packs, private language schools and public sector colleges. In the main, these are also likely to be larger companies with world-wide trading links.

The relative newcomer

Many companies have started FLTI programmes in the last two or three years. These include many small to medium-sized companies as well as larger companies which have been taken over by a foreign company, have acquired a foreign company, or which simply seek to expand their markets abroad.

The first-time buyer

These are companies with no experience of FLTI that are beginning to think about such provision. In the telephone survey, 7.2% of the exporting companies fell into this category, and obviously the SEM will swell their numbers.

The unconverted

These companies do not provide FLTI and do not see any future

need for such provision; they constituted a startling 49% of the exporting companies in the telephone survey. However, the would-be entrepreneur in FLTI should also be aware that attitudes vary from department to department and from individual to individual within a given company and should therefore be prepared to advertise the service at different levels within a given company.

The supplier of FLTI might regard all five types of companies as a potential market opportunity, but might consider a slightly different approach to newcomers to FLTI — the vast majority of future customers.

THE FLTI PRODUCT

On the whole, industry has merely dabbled in the provision of FLTI for many years, and as a result does not appear to understand the FLTI product. The majority even of those companies that do have experience of FLTI provision need a great deal of help in understanding their language needs and planning good quality FLTI programmes. For the vast majority of companies, FLTI is an unknown quantity; these companies are particularly in need of enlightenment and assistance from quality training providers.

Inexperience of FLTI, which is the result of apathy and fear, means that companies do not understand the FLTI product or how it can benefit them:

- many companies do not know where to find a good FLTI provider;
- most companies do not understand their own foreign language needs or their own FLTI needs;
- few companies understand their own needs for cultural briefing and foreign business protocol;
- few companies are aware of the benefits that a well-planned FLTI programme or programme of cultural briefing can bring;
- many companies do not know how to formulate and manage an FLTI programme or a programme of cultural training;
- most Training Managers and most learners do not understand the language learning process and how it relates to the management of training;
- many companies and learners have unrealistic expectations of FLTI;
- most companies do not consider the need to motivate personnel pursuing an FLTI programme.

WHAT DOES INDUSTRY NEED FROM A PROVIDER?

The inexperienced purchaser of FLTI needs experienced suppliers with the knowledge, expertise and sensitivity required to counter industry's lack of awareness and to offer a total service. The suppliers will need to have:

- a thorough knowledge of the foreign language needs of industry in national/local terms;

- an understanding of the language-related needs of industry, particularly in terms of cultural briefing and foreign business protocol;
- a broad understanding of the foreign language acquisition process and how this relates to FLTI;
- a broad overview of every aspect of the management and delivery of FLTI from needs analysis to assessment;
- a capability to translate these understandings into a quality FLTI service, requiring:
  - — delivery capability in a wide variety of languages (particularly German, French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Russian, Japanese and Chinese);
  - — access to first-class teachers of adult learners, teaching materials and equipment;
  - — expertise in discrete areas of foreign languages (e.g. German for engineers).

WHAT DOES INDUSTRY WANT?

The training supplier must understand not only industry's FLTI needs but also what FLTI industry is aware of wanting, or no sale and therefore no training will take place at all. Quality FLTI in the mind of the industrial purchaser is not necessarily the same as FLTI in the mind of the educationalist.

The industrial purchaser buying training is likely to want:

- outcomes;
- solutions to a problem;
- benefits to the company.

For example:

- ***Problem***: A German agent is not reliable.
- ***Solution***: The Sales Manager acquires German and does the agent's job.
- ***Benefits***: The Company saves money on the agent and sales to Germany increase.

Often the last thing adult learners want is the 'painful' process of learning a language — they would rather curtail the 'pain' as much as possible.

The good teacher, on the other hand, sees FLTI in terms of course content plus a (pleasurable and educational) process. As the process of learning and language is never complete, it is easy to underplay 'outcomes'.

The views of education and industry as to the nature of the FLTI product are not incompatible provided that the supplier remembers to sell benefits and outcomes and to deliver the pleasurable process as well.

CHOICE OF FLTI SUPPLIER

The experienced learner/purchaser will naturally tend to choose suppliers whose previous performance has been satisfactory.

Experience brings with it a clearer understanding of the FLTI product and the purchaser will be in a better position to assess and take into account the quality of the training on offer. The telephone survey suggests that the three main factors influencing the choice of supplier for this group are:

- the reputation of the provider;
- the quality and success of the training;
- the direct relevance of the course contents to the learners' job-specific needs;

The relative newcomer to FLTI is naturally less disposed to understand the FLTI product and is more likely to be influenced by the training supplier's image and marketing techniques. Face-to-face discussions with relative newcomers to FLTI revealed the following factors to be most important when choosing a supplier:

- a professional sales and marketing approach;
- clearly defined benefits to the company;
- a client-centred approach;
- flexibility with regard to course content and delivery;
- price (not the cheapest!);
- easy accessibility of the training provider.

The first-time buyers interviewed in the telephone survey put 'price' and 'flexibility' at the top of their list of requirements. As the 1992 campaign stimulates the market, there is likely to be a steady increase in first-time buyers of FLTI, and new-buyer behaviour always favours those suppliers that:

- attract positive attention to their services;
- have a good established reputation;
- can offer a total service.

Because the first-time buyer is least likely to have ready access to any information network on FLTI suppliers, the business will go to those providers that most effectively market their services and their image.

FHE AS A SUPPLIER OF FLTI

As any marketer will know, the supplier must get the four 'p's — product, price, place, promotion — right in order to gain and sustain a viable position in the market-place.

FHE scores high in industry's estimation on product quality — nearly half the companies interviewed expected to find the best quality training from an FHE establishment, and the local college would be the first line of enquiry when seeking a supplier of FLTI.

However, colleges were described as 'a good starting-point if not a good finishing-point'. Despite rapid changes in colleges, many companies still consider FHE to be product-rather than client-centred, and to be inflexible and unresponsive to their needs, particularly in terms of delivery requirements. As one Training Manager put it, 'You have to have what they say, in what doses,

and at what times. You have to play their game, their way, on their patch'. The dowdy accommodation and school-like atmosphere of some colleges act as further deterrents. Above all, poor marketing and poor business and administrative systems often make the college FLTI product inaccessible to the would-be consumer. Those colleges with a professional image and marketing — in short, those that 'act in every way like a small company' — are the only ones that will be able to compete with the private sector language school. It seems likely that these observations will apply to colleges as providers of any form of training, not just FLTI.

The college surveys show a high degree of enthusiasm for FLTI on the part of college lecturers: most of the colleges in the survey are either involved in FLTI or would like to be. Yet this positive trend should not be overestimated. From the college surveys and many individual interviews it is apparent that senior college management is often reluctant to commit the necessary resources to the development of a systematic and professional approach to FLTI from the public sector college side.

Yet the lecturer running FLTI is effectively running a small business. The lecturer/manager needs time, flexibility, money, resources and administrative support to do the job efficiently and professionally.

Time is needed for:

- setting up the business of FLTI;
- running the business of FLTI;
- marketing the service;
- sales visits/personal contacts with industry;
- managing the training;
- managing the trainers;
- managing materials design and preparation;
- materials design and preparation.

Money is needed for:

- building a database;
- secretarial and administrative help;
- design of advertising and promotional activities;
- resources (books, staff, etc.);
- materials design and production.

Resources needed include:

- marketing support (staff, systems);
- full-time staff;
- a large pool of part-time staff;
- trained staff offering at least the four major European languages, plus, preferably, Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Arabic, plus access to other languages;

- appropriate books, dictionaries, tapes and videos;
- authentic materials;
- office accommodation;
- accommodation suitable for receiving industrial clients;
- catering facilities.

Administrative support systems are needed for:

- dealing quickly and efficiently with enquiries;
- dealing quickly and efficiently with training documentation;
- dealing quickly and efficiently with tenders, invoices and payments.

Flexibility is needed for:

- organising all the above;
- dealing with the college year/timetable.

The private sector provider would expect to appoint separate individuals to the different management roles of Business Manager, Marketing Manager and Director of Studies/Training Manager as a minimum for a large language school. The public sector lecturer often has to contend with all these roles alongside a teaching timetable.

It is clear that the public sector cannot hope to compete with the private sector as long as this remains the case.

SOLUTIONS FOR FHE

If the public sector college is seriously committed to the successful provision of FLTI, senior management in FHE must be prepared to commit the staffing and other resources outlined above to the development of the service.

Staff must be prepared to commit their time outside the college year.

JOINING AN LX CENTRE

A small languages department with a limited amount to offer in terms of languages, staff, time, facilities and other resources is likely to have difficulty making an impact on the FLTI market. An attractive scenario for many small languages departments, therefore, may be for them to pool their resources with other public sector providers by joining or setting up an LX centre or consortium.

An LX centre or consortium arrangement has many advantages, both for the provider and the industrial client.

From industry's point of view, the LX centre can offer an efficient business system that makes the 'FHE quality product' more readily accessible and provides a 'single outlet' that can meet all of industry's language-related needs.

From the college lecturer's point of view, the LX centre should offer a professional, up-market image, as well as taking over a number of business roles that are not always easy to fulfil from

within a college. The LX centre will usually run the business, the administration of tenders, contracts, invoices and payments and the marketing aspects of FLTI, and may also assist with the management of training. This leaves college staff free to concentrate on their traditional role as providers of high quality training, if this seems desirable and cost-effective.

FLTI STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Whilst it is certainly true that the quality of language teaching in FHE is high, and staff have many transferable skills to bring to FLTI, there is nevertheless little experience of designing or teaching highly specialised FLTI courses at 'grass-roots' level, and further training is urgently needed if the enthusiasm of lecturers of FLTI is to be fully utilised.

FINAL REMARKS: IMPROVING THE EDUCATION-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP

Industry, education and the government must work together to change industry's foreign language needs into wants, and wants into realities.

A more positive and systematic approach is needed from both the industry and the college side if British industry is to be equipped with the languages and international interpersonal skills needed to be competitive in the 1990s and beyond.

FHE has the capability to provide quality FLTI in all the languages that industry needs, and the lecturers have commitment and enthusiasm. A commitment of resources to FLTI and a national marketing effort is needed to capitalise on that capability and commitment.

The LX network is a major step in the right direction, making the excellence of the FHE FLTI product more readily accessible to the consumer and providing a 'single outlet' for all local industry's language needs. But this initiative needs continued support from education, industry and funding agencies alike.

A national database of all FLTI providers to include provision of cultural briefing and other related services is urgently required.

Printed directories of FLTI providers and provision by regional area should be drawn up and distributed via LX centres, Chambers of Commerce and other interested bodies.

A promotional video aimed at companies on 'why and how to buy foreign language training' should be produced.

A national database of suitable published language teaching materials (video, audio, computer and print-led) should be produced, and should include technical dictionaries.

The development of more communicative teaching materials for the business learner, both of a general business nature and for specific technical purposes, is an urgent requirement, as is a materials bank of existing (unpublished) language teaching materials in foreign languages for specific purposes.

Above all, education, industry and government must work together to augment the campaign to publicise the need for foreign languages in business and the value of FLTI in meeting that need.

The alternative is that 'the hidden cost of not using the customer's language will continue rising and Britain will remain Anglocentric and its people culturally marginalised in an increasingly multilinguistic and multicultural world' (Hagen, 1988).

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